

TRAINING DAY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

**Hans Gives a Vivid Description of One of
Them—Hamilton on George III.'s
Birthday.**

For the Hamilton TIMES.

As we sit on a stone, belonging to a broken arch, at the ruins on McInnes' corner, we wept not as we thought of the day when the Canadian militiaman in the height of his glory made this spot the great attraction on the return of each training day. As we gazed on the grand display in the streets—the bunting coquettishly flirting with the flagstuffs, our thoughts drifted backwards to the 4th of June 'training days,' when we, poor, green fellows, came here to see the sights. We had struggled for weeks to get the work ahead, so as to have leisure to come hither, and we had laid aside our coppers for months and worked hard at our tasks early and late, to obtain the reward of an American quarter dollar for our industry. As the great day approached, we became more and more

excited, until sleep was nearly banished from our eyelids. Simple souls that we were, we felt great anxiety to have our clothes in proper trim. Our new broad brimmed straw hat with the gay red ribbon band trailing just beyond its periphery, was frequently examined and returned to the peg where it had proudly roosted for a week. Our low cowhide shoes had been blackened with milk and the soot from the chimney-back and set a side while we went barefoot. Our very short jacket, with side pockets under the sleeves, was frequently examined and the brass buttons kept bright. Our short, baggy pants were carefully brushed, and our new striped shirt with broad collar—for which we had churned so many weary hours that mother might spare money enough to buy the material with—was carefully folded and laid aside. Folly's germ lingered with us and we were not destitute of jewellery, for the big Indian brooch to fasten our shirt collar with was kept shining bright. The great day at length arrives, and the lazy sun creeps slowly up from behind the dark green tree tops, and our preparations are hurried forward. We push along through

the dusty, stumpy road and reach the village of Hamilton. Some come on foot, some on horseback and others in large waggons with house chairs instead of seats—one filled with men and women, boys and girls. In the street, dashing about from side to side, ride the country hopefuls, shouting and exchanging coarse jokes.

Matthew Bailey (who afterwards protected Mr. W. Lyon McKenzie when attacked by Kerr, Condon and Pettit) kept a small bakery a little east from the present Morgan mills and dispensed the candy, ginger beer and cakes. With him we spent our coppers, and obtaining a large card of gingerbread, we broke it into convenient sized parallelograms and setting a piece upright into each jacket pocket, and removing our handkerchief to our pants' pocket, we left a corner dangling out to let the crowd see that we had one. We grasped the balance of our gingerbread in our two hands and holding it in front of us, gnawed perseveringly at it while our eyes rolled wonderingly at the grand display that opened to our ravished vision as we surveyed the surging crowds and walked slowly

around the low wet corner to Carey's great brick hotel, now known as the McInnes corner. This is one of the historical points in and about Hamilton. It was here that Mr. John G. Parker afterwards kept an extensive dry goods store, occupying a part of the first and the whole of the upper flat as a dwelling. At the breaking out of the rebellion of 1837 Mr. Parker was arrested on a charge of high treason and cast into prison, and his dwelling and store were locked up and a guard set over them, Mrs. Parker and the children taking refuge at Mr. Bostwick's (her father) house in Toronto. * Mr. Parker admitted that he had 'written letters that would bear a treasonable construction.' This was all that could be brought against him, nevertheless, he was kept in prison and his business left to go to ruin, until orders came from the Home Government directing that he and several others should be sent to England. They were accordingly put on board a steamer and sent down the St. Lawrence. Mr. Parker being accustomed to a comfortable home complains bitterly in his diary of the treatment he received on board, being obliged to wrap himself in his cloak

and lie down at night on the forecastle, in the filth about the feet of the horses. Not long after his arrival in England he was released by the authorities and simply advised not to return to Canada, which advice, as in duty bound, he accepted, and set up business in Rochester, N. Y.

As we have already signified, Carey's corner was the place of muster, on the 4th of June training days. William Green, one of the heroes of Stoney Creek, in scarlet jacket, cap and white pants, would take a position in the open cupola on the centre of the cottage roof, and with his snare drum, call the valiant militia together. The different companies being drawn up in double files, impatient wait, in the broiling sunshine, the order to move. Quiet, kindly old officers, in blue frock, sash, and white linen pants, who have seen service in the war of 1812, stride majestically in front of their companies, proud of their charge, whom they had plied with whiskey, distributed by the pailful, from Carey's hotel. Looking down the line, a grotesque and motley spectacle presented itself—here a tall man, with a straw hat on his head, and his coat thrown over his left arm ; next a short, fat

man, with his hat in his hand, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and returning his bandanna to the inside of his plug; another wears a blue pigeon-tail coat, and instead of a musket, sports a short hickory cane, and still another has possession of his wife's umbrella, she, good soul, having taken shelter in their waggon which stands beneath a shade tree, while the horses partake of their noon-day meal 'from the tail-end' of the box. The men's home uniforms may be divided into an equal number of blue frock coats and blue pigeon-tails, bell-crowned plugs and broad-brimmed straw hats, the prevailing color of the pants being white. The fantastic appearance of the companies comes through no fault of the privates, neither the absence of arms nor discipline. Nearly all are sound, loyal men, willing to defend their country to the best of their ability, not counting pluck, which has been nurtured by tales of the revolution and the late war. The easy-going colonel, having returned from a short inspection, gives the order, 'Right, half-face.' The veterans immediately obey the order, while the raw ones look along the line for some old flanker to

see what position he is in. In a few minutes all are ready to move, when suddenly Wm. Green and Billy Ayres, the two drummers, with two fifers, take their position at the head of the column and the order, 'Forward, march!' is pompously given. The fifes and drums strike up a lively air, the companies sway and stagger and tread on each other's heels, or leave great gaps, which the sergeants vainly endeavor to close up.

They move on to the common in the rear of the jail, when an attempt is made to bring them to a halt. But such confusion! The rear companies are flanking the front companies and making their way to the shade of the rail fence and the trees, where half of them throw themselves on the grass. The colonel trots his horse to and fro, yells and gesticulates fiercely, but all to no purpose. At length, apparently heart broken, he subsides into quiet resignation. Now follows an exhibition of one of the strong points in the men's character. They love and respect their colonel, they are ashamed of their conduct and rise to their feet and form as well as they know how. After much perplexity the companies are formed in

quarter column, inspected, reported, extended into line and addressed by the

colonel, who thanks them for their attendance, their good intentions, their loyalty, and—and (pausing, faintly says) 'your soldierly (?) bearing'; and tells them they will be directly relieved from duty on returning to the hotel—all of which they distinctly understand. Three cheers are given for the king, in which the boys on the fences and in the trees join—even the loyalist daughters flirt their handkerchiefs, and the good old women wipe a tear from their eyes. Three cheers for the governor, three for the colonel, three for everybody. No sooner has the cheering ceased than a general race takes place to headquarters. The officers are left behind, and console themselves by discussing the merits of their men and the cause of the failure of the attempted movements. On the arrival of the men at the big hotel, the companies are very creditably formed to receive the pails of whiskey, and cheer lustily as the officers come up. The roll being called, the attendance of members of companies has increased; there is also an addition of a great number of volunteers. As the pails pass along the line, some who do not wish to drink,

take the rear rank, allowing those who are 'terribly thirsty' to come to the front. A similar change takes place as the pails pass along the line by which the thirsty are agreeably accommodated. The men being dismissed, the captains pay for the wholesale treat, and the colonel pays the captains' personal bills. The quiet hasten homeward; foot races, wrestling, some fisticuffing and 'scrub races' follow. The sun sinks languidly behind the Flamboro' hills, his fire goes out, and sultry sullen darkness closes the scene.

HANS.

May 24th, 1880.

An old and respected resident of Saltfleet, Martha Green, widow of the late William Green, passed away on Sunday morning at the residence of her son, John W. Green. The deceased had been declining in health for the last year, although death was unexpected until three days ago. The late Mrs. Green was born at Burlington Heights, in what was then called the block house or powder magazine, used during the war of 1812 for that purpose. She spent her girlhood days around Hamilton, which at that time was only a village. She was second daughter of the late Hugh Morrison, and the only surviving one of that family, and was in her 85th year. She had resided in the vicinity of Stoney Creek for the last seventy years. She leaves two sons, John W. Green and Samuel A. Green, and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The funeral will take place on Tuesday at 2 o'clock

from the residence of her son, John W. Green, mountain top, Stoney Creek, to Stoney Creek Methodist Church, of which she was a member for 53 years. The interment will be in the family plot at Stoney Creek burying grounds.

Hamilton Times - December 20, 1909

STONEY CREEK.

Reminiscences of the Battle in 1813.

To the Editor of the TIMES :

SIR,—If you will favor me with the use of your valuable paper for a few reminiscences of one of the veterans of the war of 1812 and 1813, who took an active part in the battle of Stoney Creek, I will be grateful to you. I have read with interest the war stories in your paper of your correspondent Hans B. B. E. He has told you and your many readers how the British got possession of the American countersign on the eve of the battle of Stoney Creek, the 5th of June, 1813 ; how Isaac Corman got it from one of the American officers while he was a prisoner in charge of the Americans ; how on his way home after his release from imprisonment he met the gallant young scout, William Green, to whom Mr. Corman communicated the American countersign. Let us now follow this gallant young hero, who had not yet reached his 18th year of

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age, as he dashes away with the fleetness of an Indian through the woods to his home at Stoney Creek, where he procures a horse, mounts it, and rides with all possible haste to General Vincent's headquarters at Burlington Heights. General Vincent's position on Burlington Heights was a most critical one. York on one side and Fort George on the other had both fallen; his ammunition, which he was obliged to abandon or destroy before evacuating Fort George, was now reduced to ninety rounds of ball cartridge for each man, and were he forced to continue his retreat, unless the British fleet, under Sir James Yeo, could reach the anchorage near the Brant House, four miles from his position and carry off his small force, he would have to continue it by way of York (Toronto), thence to Kingston over 200 miles of hard country roads—not such roads as we have at the present day. The reader will remember that York

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halls, or as colonels of the Upper Canada militia. We may here note that at a "Queenston Heights Annual Dinner," over thirty years ago, Sir Allan MacNab gave as a toast, "The Fighting Judges of Upper Canada." There were at that time five of those judges still living who had served through the whole war. The young Canadian reader may thus form his estimate of the men who stood in the ranks of our Niagara frontier army in 1812-13, doing battle for their king and country. We will now return to that ever-memorable day, Saturday, the 5th of June, 1813. The advance guard, or rather rear guard, of the British that afternoon was stationed two miles in rear of the entrenched camp, near the present Court House and square in the city of Hamilton. Hamilton was then nowhere—not even a village. On that spot, half an hour before midnight, the attacking party of 704 men was formed and took up its line of march

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on Stoney Creek, under Colonel Harvey. During the day—Saturday, the 5th of June, 1813—Colonel Harvey (afterwards Sir John Harvey, Governor of New Brunswick,) had acquainted himself with the American position. Some say that he had visited their camp at Stoney Creek during the day disguised as a farmer on his way to his work. Be this as it may, Harvey made himself thoroughly acquainted with the American position, and, having got possession of the American counter-sign from the heroic young William Green, he proposed a night attack, which General Vincent approved of. Let us now follow this brave little army, with their 704 unloaded muskets and flintless locks, on their mission into the jaws of death. Before starting, command was given for every flint to be taken out of their muskets and not to even whisper, so as to prevent the possibility of an accidental alarm. Every man, however, had his well filled cartouche box, containing sixty rounds of

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ball cartridge, and his trusty bayonet by his side. The fate of Upper Canada depended upon the success or failure of this night surprise. Silently they moved, not a whisper was heard ; there was silence deep as death in the ranks during that midnight march of seven miles. On and on they tread through that dense forest in the solemn hours of the night. So silently did they move that not a sound was heard, not a sound to quell the dreadful silence that prevailed, save now and then the cracking of a stray dry branch under foot, an occasional splash of some unfortunate fellow who makes a misstep into some mud hole, the howl of the wolf or the hoot of the night owl, or a whispered word of command. Have you ever, reader, walked at night along a country road of Upper Canada in the old time, the road often times only a narrow trail and so dark that you could not see your hand before you, with great towering trees of oak, elm, walnut, pine, etc., over-

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This ends our sketch of the battle of Stoney Creek.

And now as nearly all of those gallant men who fought and bled to maintain our rights and liberties as well as theirs have passed away, the best thing we of the present can do to commemorate that victory, will be to erect a suitable monument on that old battle-field near Stoney Creek.

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